



## “Spot a Basking Shark” Project

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### Introduction:

NOAA-NMFS recently designated the basking shark a “Species of Concern” in the eastern North Pacific for three main reasons:

- 1) The population has declined dramatically.
- 2) The population has not recovered 50 years after the closure of the basking shark fishery in this region.
- 3) A severe lack of life history, distribution, and abundance data makes it impossible to form a recovery plan for the population.

In an effort to fill these severe data gaps, the Pacific Shark Research Center (PSRC) at Moss Landing Marine Laboratories (MLML) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have initiated the “Spot a Basking Shark” Project. Through this project, publically-reported sightings information is used to learn more about the occurrence patterns of basking sharks.



### How You can Help:

Your information can help our research team understand the as-yet unknown distribution and migration routes of this Species of Concern in the eastern North Pacific. If you see a basking shark, report your sighting by emailing [baskingshark@mlml.calstate.edu](mailto:baskingshark@mlml.calstate.edu), or call (831) 771-4438 or (858) 334-2884.

Learn more by visiting

<http://psrc.mlml.calstate.edu/current-research/basking-shark/>



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### About Basking Sharks:

As the second largest fish in the world, basking sharks reach lengths of 33 feet (10 m). These sharks occur worldwide, but little is known about their migrations and general life history. Basking sharks are gray or brown in color with pointed snouts, large mouths, and gill slits that almost encircle their heads. The most visible feature is usually the large dorsal fin. These sluggish sharks often bask at the surface with their large mouths open to filter-feed on zooplankton. They tend to be social and are often seen in groups of 2-3 individuals, but have been known to form larger groups of up to 500 individuals.

### Project Goals:

The “Spot a Basking Shark” project is an effort by NMFS and the PSRC to gain information on the abundance, population status, distribution, and migrations of eastern North Pacific basking sharks. The four main goals of the project are to:

- 1) Determine the abundance and occurrence of basking sharks in the eastern North Pacific using a web-based reporting system designed for the public to record sightings.
- 2) Improve understanding of the essential habitat and geographic range of the basking shark in the eastern North Pacific.
- 3) Obtain additional biological and spatial information by data-mining new and existing records.
- 4) Improve the data collection and access to historic information on basking sharks from countries across the eastern North Pacific.



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